PACE Staff Highlight: Employee Excellence Award Nominees

This past year, the PACE HR department held employee excellence award nominations. The process was exhaustive: each Teacher nominated an Instructional Specialist from his/her classroom, each Residential Administrator nominated a staff member from each house, and EI nominated one Developmental Member from each house, and EI Administrator nominated a staff member from each house, and EI.

Here are the nominees with excerpts from their nominations:

- **Christian Taeza, PACE School Room 1**: “A thoughtful, reliable person who cares deeply about children with disabilities.”
- **Adriana Carrasco, Rm 2**: “Her positive affect starts and ends with a smile.”
- **Mattie Briggs, Rm 3**: “Her flexibility includes volunteering to work with more challenging students and taking on additional responsibilities.”
- **Justin Wirth, Rm 4**: “He has a friendly and kind demeanor toward students and staff alike.”
- **Jessica Tucker, Rm 5**: “She is reliable and eager to take on a leadership role in the classroom.”
- **Dickson Beckley, Rm 6**: “He provides positive encouragement to his peers, and volunteers to conduct mini lessons in the classrooms.”
- **Troy Scott, ADP**: “He is reliable and able to work with all students with a positive demeanor.”
- **Shantea Huery, EI (DT)**: “She always arrives early to sessions and takes extra time to speak to parents when needed, as well as volunteers for extra sessions when necessary.”
- **Ariana Lee, Sunny Days Preschool**: “She is flexible, always willing to help and is a source of encouragement in the classroom.”
- **Corazon Dee, PACE Morehouse**: “She creates a positive, safe work environment.”
- **Teresa Rivas, Miracle House**: “She enforces guidelines and boundaries with residents with a positive smile.”
- **Helena Serpa, Meadows**: “Her big heart and reliability motivates her co-workers through example.”
- **Petronila Tacmo, Matranga**: “She is a team player that communicates effectively with team members as well as residents and their families.”
- **Massa Moigua, LaMar**: “She has a great positive personality and willingness to step out of her comfort zone when needed.”
- **Maria Bassiga, Mahalo**: “She finds positive ways to encourage residents to do their daily tasks.”

Congratulations to all PACE Employee Excellence Award nominees!

PACE Volunteer Spotlight: Carmen Pascual

Spectacular volunteers come to PACE on a weekly basis doing everything from landscape design to assisting at Sunny Days Preschool. Over the past two and half years, one volunteer in particular has made an impact on PACE’s Development Department. Carmen Pascual has been involved in nearly all of PACE events since our 2008 Gala, An Enchanted Evening.

When Carmen volunteers, she comes in with a mission; the mission usually involves procuring amazing auction items for the PACE Golf Tournament and Gala. And, according to Bridget Hollow, PACE’s Annual Fund Manager, “Carmen has increased the caliber of PACE’s auction items tenfold! Her persistence and determination on the phone is unparalleled.”

When Carmen is not volunteering for PACE, she is donating her time at many other community organizations and advancing her professional skills. In addition, she was the campaign manager for a local candidate in the 2010 elections. Carmen is well known and connected in the community; we are grateful to have her at PACE!

PACE Events

**PACE 3rd Annual Golf Classic**
Monday, May 23, 2011
Cinnabar Hills Golf Course, San Jose
11am Registration; 12:30pm Tee-Off Scramble Tournament
Your ticket includes:
* lunch
* 18 beautiful fairways
* refreshments on course
* goody bag
* exciting contests including closest to the pin, putting, longest drive, and hole-in-one
* dinner and awards
* live and silent auction
* team picture
* and more.

Hole-in-One wins a 2011 Buick Regal!

**Early Bird Special**
$175/single, $700/foursome
After May 2nd: $195, $780

To purchase tickets, become a sponsor or make a donation please visit www.pacificautism.org, email development@pacificautism.org or call 408.245.3400. All proceeds benefit PACE programs and services.

**The South Bay Autism Resource Fair**
Saturday, April 16, 2011
Notre Dame de Namur University
9am to 3:30pm

Presented by Wings Learning Center, this 1st Annual Information Exposition features workshops about sensory integration and ASD, housing needs, special needs financial planning, Autism and health insurance, curriculums for students with ASD, and more. Go to www.pacificautism.org to learn more.

**Spring Rebuilding Day 2011**
Saturday, April 30 2011

The Cupertino Rotary Club has chosen Morehouse for rehabilitation during their 2011 Spring Rebuilding Day. Stay tuned for the results on the PACE blog (blogs.boomerang.com/pace.)

**Save the Date**

**PACE’s 10th Annual Gala “Imagine”**
Saturday, November 5th, 2011
Dolce Hayes Mansion, San Jose

If you are interested in volunteering for PACE, please visit our website at www.pacificautism.org or call Bridget Hollow at 408-625-6175.

Autism News

Excerpt from ScienceDaily.com. For every $1 invested in a Chicago early childhood education program, nearly $11 is projected to return to society over the children’s lifetimes — equivalent to an 18 percent annual return on program investment, according to a study led by University of Minnesota professor of child development Arthur Reynolds in the College of Education and Human Development. For the analysis, Reynolds and other researchers evaluated the effectiveness of the Chicago Public Schools’ federally funded Child Parent Centers (CPCs) established in 1967. Their work represents the first long-term economic analysis of an existing, large-scale early education program. Researchers surveyed study participants and their parents, and analyzed education, employment, public aid, criminal justice, substance use and child welfare records for the participants through age 26. As public institutions are being pressed to cut costs, the findings suggest that increasing access to high-quality programs starting in preschool and continuing into the early grades is an efficient use of public resources. For more information on this story, go to www.sciencedaily.com.
PACE News

School is Re-Certified with Flying Colors

In February, PACE School went through the triennial Non-Public School (NPS) re-certification process. This involved 3 days of an in-depth, on-site review by three reviewers from the California Department of Education (CDE). We are proud to report that PACE School was re-certified with flying colors!

The CDE commended PACE School in multiple areas, including:

- “A facility that welcomes the students and provides a clean, appropriately lighted school which incorporates the use of technology in almost all instruction throughout the day.”
- “Teachers’ enthusiasm and dedication towards their students - they demonstrate overwhelming compassion and caring.”
- “Cohesive teams of teachers, aides, OT and speech therapists as well as behaviorists to address student behaviors and redirect those behaviors in a positive manner.”
- “The wonderful school website that is easily navigated and informative.”
- “The interactive IEP process in use during IEP planning meetings where discussion is led based on a video recording of the performance of the student demonstrating their proficiency of each goal.”
- “Focus on student participation in community experiences including vocational training.”
- “The effective use of pictorials of students displayed throughout facility and in specific lesson plans.”

Thank you to all PACE staff for supporting such a wonderful learning environment for PACE students!

Wells Fargo PMB Los Gatos Program Benefits PACE

Besides the unveiling of Christine’s hard work, PACE received another substantial gift at the Lamar celebration. Sonia Avila of Wells Fargo Private Mortgage, Los Gatos presented a check for $2100, which will support PACE’s programs and services. The monies came from seven individuals who selected PACE to benefit from Wells Fargo Private Mortgage Community program. Anyone who takes out a mortgage with Wells Fargo, PMB Los Gatos can select a nonprofit to receive a $300 contribution for any refinance or purchase transaction! For more information about the program, contact sonia.avila@wellsfargo.com.

PACE Greets New OT and Behaviorist

Melissa Schulz will serve as our PACE Behaviorist. This is the first time PACE has had a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) on our staff. As an added bonus, Melissa is also a Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP). She has over 8 years of school experience working with students with moderate-to-severe needs. Melissa will spend half her time with the residential program and half her time with the school.

Jennifer Davis is our new Occupational Therapist in the School program. Jennifer is a recent masters graduate in OT from San Jose State. Her masters thesis focused on the perception of play and social interactions in children with visual impairments, so she is on track to help build social engagement with our students.

How You Can Help

Please consider making a donation to PACE in one of the following ways:
- Secure online donations can be made directly to PACE on our website at www.pacificautism.org.
- Donations can be mailed to PACE, 155 Kearny Ave., Santa Clara, CA 95050.
- Secure online donations can be made directly to PACE on our website at www.pacificautism.org.
- Donations by mail by sending your contributions to 1880 Pruneridge Ave., Santa Clara, CA 95050.
- Donate by telephone by calling 408-245-3400 and using your credit card to make a contribution.
- Double your gift with an employee matching gift contribution.
- A donation made in someone's honor is a lovely way to acknowledge someone special and also support PACE.
- To include PACE in your workplace giving options, please contact Karen Kennan at 408-625-6176.
- Do you have an item you want to give away? It may be on PACE’s Wish List. Contact karenkennan@pacificautism.org to make an In-Kind donation.
Great Givers

In this issue of PACESetter we turn the spotlight on Christine Reed, whose extraordinary contribution of time and talent as the landscape architect for Lamar House’s residential courtyard has enhanced the quality of life of PACE residents.

The PACE volunteer description on VolunteerMatch.org was so detailed the need for a landscaper to take care of safety and aesthetic issues in Lamar House’s backyard. But when Christine Reed, a landscape architect with over eight years of experience, came across the listing and PACE’s description, she imagined higher potential for the space that would respond to the specific needs of individuals with Autism. Hundreds of hours of volunteer time and donated materials later, Lamar House realized that potential.

Christine’s experience with both private and public sector landscape projects, through her own firm CE Reed Studio and her work with an established San Francisco firm on larger scale civic and campus landscapes, put her in a unique frame of mind when considering Lamar’s potential. While the backyard would have a general focus for the children, she envisioned a space that could also be a gathering place for other houses. Even further, the project could also be treated as a case study about what landscape architecture could do for individuals with developmental disabilities, and in turn become an inspiration for other spaces.

“Since individuals with Autism often have difficulty with sensory processing, I decided that my garden design would focus on perception,” Christine says. “I wanted to make the space more responsive and accommodating to the residents.”

Christine did copious amounts of research to start the project. While there were many examples of utilizing outdoor space for therapy in hospital settings, she found none for smaller residential environments for people with special needs. From February to August of last year, Christine researched the general topic of Autism; interviewed and fleshed out ideas with Kurt Ghifs, PACE Executive Director, the School therapy staff, and the Residential staff; and investigated how residents used the Lamar backyard, including crafting a detailed questionnaire for caretakers and PACE staff. She used all this research to identify the key criteria and goals of the new landscape.

After the research came the design phase: this included conceptual drawings that depicted a safe and functional environment. She presented this to the PACE Board of Directors, and after the Board approved her direction Christine created more detailed and specific construction drawings.

Christine considered every detail in providing a unique space for individuals with Autism. For instance, she levelled all the ground flush to avoid tripping hazards. Partly transparent partition screens divide the three distinct spaces, which allow one to see through but still gives a psychological sense of separation. This makes it easier for the brain to structure and process the landscape. Christine got the idea for the screens from touring the PACE School: she noticed that the students used their desks to provide order and structure for their bodies in the classroom.

In response to this, Christine divided the space into 3 segments each of which has its own purpose while also flowing into a cohesive whole. For example, the quiet zone, intended for residents when they need peace and quiet, includes more plants and blue mulch to provide that sense of calm while also allowing residents to enjoy the outdoors. The second space, “the outdoor living room,” is an extension of the indoor living room, with a huge deck that looks out onto the yard. Then the “fun area” includes a trampoline and space to release some energy.

Christine is very excited about the project coming to fruition. “Kurt and Karen [Kennan’s] support and enthusiasm pushed me to work further and craft something that would work for adults with Autism,” Christine says. “Much of the landscape architecture out there right now is aimed toward kids, but as the Autism population ages, it’s imperative to have designs in place to improve their quality of life too.”

Christine will continue to monitor the space as part of her goal to use Lamar as a pilot study to see how these specifically designed spaces can improve quality of life for individuals with Autism. Before the project started, Lamar staff logged how and for how long residents used the previous space. Using that as baseline data, now that the project is done the staff will continue to document how the residents use the area to assess the impact.

“The therapeutic benefits of gardens and outdoor spaces are well documented,” Christine says. “So above all, the goal has been to create a place that draws residents, caretakers, visiting family and friends outside to enjoy the stress-relieving and therapeutically beneficial features of a garden. The space’s design aims to encourage connection to the environment, and in turn instill an awareness of how our environment shapes how we experience the world.”

PACE welcomes the latest additions to our growing team of dedicated professionals, and wishes a happy anniversary to our seasoned veterans who have been with PACE for more than five years:

**Welcome!**
- September-December: Kristoffer Thacker
- Angel Wilcox
- Jassie Dava
- Jairo Picazo
- Daniela Quintana
- Lyubov Grobman
- David Vargas
- James Holmes
- Amanda Freenoe
- Fanny Williams
- Moses Degu
- Tendai Mushamba
- Christopher Dumloa
- Simone Scott

**Happy Anniversary!**
- October-February: Carla Brooks
- Jason Louie
- Jesus Borgeglin
- Jesus Arias
- Jeana Rabanal
- Jennifer Davis
- Melissa Schulz
- Nery Bravo, 5 yrs
- Rosa Datacyay, 9 yrs
- Catherine Nje, 9 yrs
- Marlene Taara, 9 yrs
- Zora Rice, 14 yrs
- Ricardo Velazquez, 5 yrs
- Chris Pono, 9 yrs
- Alejandra Joven, 10 yrs
- Helen Serpa, 10 yrs
- Marquis Zane, 11 yrs
- Kanwarjit “Gogi” Kang, 12 yrs
- Mary Carter, 14 yrs
- Nancy Brown, 18 yrs
- Mata Kamara, 18 yrs
- Ravinder “Ruby” Kaur, 9 yrs
- Rosie Villareal, 9 yrs
- Dayis Aguilar, 10 yrs
- Sonia Aimonetti, 13 yrs

**PACE Committees**

Join PACE Social and Safety Committee! Make a difference and have your voice be heard while planning for employee events and making PACE a more enjoyable and safe workplace. If interested email the HR department at hr@pacifictim.org.

Open enrollment is soon approaching in June/July 2011! More information regarding the PACE benefits for medical, dental, vision, life insurance, long term disability and the employee assistance program will come shortly.

Join the PACE Team! Open positions:

- Special Education Teacher L1 / L2 - K-12
- Instructional Specialist –K-12 School

Thanks to all employees for making PACE such a great place to work!

**Lamar House during construction:** December 2010

Good fortune enabled Christine to obtain Jensen as a contractor. The well-known construction firm GAVE PACE a discounted price on the project and through their sub-contractor also donated some of the actual building materials, such as trees, plants and mulch. Construction started in early December and just finished in February. In all, the whole process took exactly one year from February 2010 to February 2011.

Indeed, after one year the landscape has made an amazing transformation. Before, Christine says, “the backyard was one long space. You could see from one end to the other with no visual separation, which made for a confusing sensory experience.”

In response to this, Christine divided the space into 3 segments each of which has its own purpose while also flowing into a cohesive whole. For example, the quiet zone, intended for residents when they need peace and quiet, includes more plants and blue mulch to provide that sense of calm while also allowing residents to enjoy the outdoors. The second space, “the outdoor living room,” is an extension of the indoor living room, with a huge deck that looks out onto the yard. Then the “fun area” includes a trampoline and space to release some energy.

Lamar House after construction: March 2010

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**Lamar House after construction:** March 2010

• Donate your old vehicle to Donate for Charity, a company that processes vehicle donations. Call 866-392-4483 or use their website www.donateforcharity.com/jumpfrom.html. Donate for Charity handles all the details and distributes the net proceeds to PACE!

• Go to www.escrip.com and go to the “sign on” screen. Enter PACE’s ID number: 472692 to register your credit or gift card. PACE will receive a percentage of the money spent on your purchases when using preferred merchants such as Safeway, Macy’s, American Airlines and Draeger’s Market.

PACE is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions to PACE are tax-deductable as specified in the current tax laws. The Tax ID for PACE is 77-0259858.

www.pacificautism.org

United Way
United Way Silicon Valley

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Ask a Therapist

Dear PACE Therapists,

What is “active listening,” and how is it relevant to communicating with my child with Autism?

As we all know, the most important part of communicating is being a good listener. This is no less true—and perhaps even more important—while communicating with an individual with Autism. Active listening shows that we are interested and that we care about what the individual has to communicate, which motivates him to communicate with us. Here are a few specific aspects of “active listening”:

• Reflecting: Identifying your feelings and the feelings of the other person. Example: “It seems like you are scared right now, is that right?”

• Encouraging: Sounding open and positive so that the child will be more comfortable. Examples: Nodding your head, saying “yeaah”

• Clarifying: Asking questions to make sure you know what he/she is asking or saying. Using clarifying statements ensures that you understand what he is trying to say and just as importantly he knows you understand him. Paraphrase what you heard. Example: “is that right?”

• “I” Statements: Using “I” puts less pressure on the individual and prevents her from feeling like she is being interrogated. Example: “I need you to please put your toy away” instead of “Put your toy away.”

• Summarizing: Repeating what came out of the conversation and clearly stating the decision or take-away. Example: “So because you are feeling sad because of what happened at home, we have agreed that you can write in your journal instead of doing math today. Is that right?”

• Eye Contact: Making and keeping good eye contact shows interest, involvement, and respect. Of course, be aware of student’s comfort level. Eye contact can be difficult for individuals with Autism, but that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t try to make eye contact with them!

While these tips are helpful to be a good communicator with anyone, it is especially critical to exercise these foundations for individuals with Autism, who often have difficulty with communication and social interaction. After all, modeling behavior is one of the most effective ways to teach!

PACE Therapists

If you have a question for Ask a Therapist, email pacesetter@pacificautism.org.

April is Autism Awareness Month!

More exciting events in recognition of Autism Awareness Month are:

• “Wretches and Jabberers” screenings: 12pm, April 9, AMC Theatres Santa Clara. This new movie follows two men with Autism who embark on a global quest to change attitudes about disability, intelligence and communication. For more information visit www.autism-society.org.

• Free photo session for families with an individual with Autism: imotion, Los Gatos. Each family will be gifted a complimentary photo shoot and a 12x18 canvas of their favorite picture (together worth over $500), imotion will host this campaign throughout the month of April for Autism Awareness Month. +PACE community presentations: Your workplace. Does your work have a brown bag lunch or presentation series? PACE would be more than happy to present at your workplace about Autism, especially in the month of April. Contact 408.625.6176 or development@pacificautism.org.

PACE Board of Directors

Joe Demer, President
Kati Miller, Vice President
Geoff Davis, Treasurer
Valerie Burniece
Stephanie De Raynal
Lorna Drobe
Gail Hashimoto
Scott Johnson
Christian Picone
Madhu Ranganathan
Jocelyn Garcia-Thome

Need a Gift for Mother’s or Father’s Day? Making a donation in honor of someone is a lovely way to show your appreciation. Call 408.625.6175 or email development@pacificautism.org for more information.

Innovative Giving

What Kind of Legacy Will You Leave? Leave a legacy that will sustain PACE long into the future. Please consider a gift to PACE in your estate plan. Your donation will help PACE connect, support and educate by ensuring high quality programs for children and adults with Autism, now and in the future. If you have made a gift to PACE in your will or trust, please let us know so we can thank you and recognize your generosity. To learn more about how you can make a legacy gift to PACE contact Karen Kennan, Assistant Executive Director, at 408.625.6176 or e-mail karenkennan@pacificautism.org. All inquiries are confidential and without obligation.

YLC Raises $8500 at Mixer

On March 19th, PACE hosted the 2nd annual “Breaking the Silence” Mixer for a sold-out crowd of over 900 Bay Area high school students at the San Jose State College gym. The event was organized by PACE’S Youth Leadership Committee (YLC), a group of passionate young philanthropists who raise awareness and funds for PACE. The group topped last year's successful event: mixer tickets were sold out by Friday evening, and ultimately the dance raised over $5,000! The Mixer included music spun by DJs from WILD 94.9, spectacular lighting effects by PLM productions, drinks, and dancing.

Joseph Wang and Ji An as co-project managers of the Mixer spearheaded the efforts and overall vision, and the whole committee participated in publicizing and logistics planning.

Joseph said, “With the help and guidance of Hannah Nguyen, YLC President, and Bridget Holian, PACE’s Annual Fund Manager and YLC advisor, Ji and I were able to make the Mixer as successful as possible. The whole process of collaborating with other people who really care about Autism was what made my experience as the chair of the subcommittee so rewarding. All of the effort that everyone from the YLC and PACE put into the Mixer made me realize that success comes with the help of other people.”

PACESetter

A newsletter providing information on PACE programs and services.

Published by Karen Kennan
Edited by Nora Martin
Contributors: Joe Demer, Karen Kennan, Bridget Holian, Nora Martin, PACE staff
Executive Director: Kurt Ottofs

PACE’s mission is to provide high quality programs for individuals with Autism and its related developmental disabilities, so they may experience the satisfaction and fulfillment that accompany learning, self-expression, self-care, productive work and interpersonal and community experiences.

YLC at the Mixer

High school students interested in joining the committee for the 2011-2012 school year should send a letter of interest to bridgetholian@pacificautism.org.

For more details on events happening throughout the month of April, please visit www.pacificautism.org.